

Cops enforce health codes to shut down drug dens

By Harry Harris
The Tribune

Wed. 12/1/88

The cocaine dealers selling out of the filthy East Oakland "crack house" were so brazen they once grabbed a garbage man off his truck and forced him to haul away some of the piled-up refuse.

The same dealers were so bold they warned a city inspector not even to drive down their street.

Police boarded up the dealers' house last week through an innovative program that already has eliminated a dozen blighted houses and is turning into an effective tool against the estimated 1,000 crack houses in the city.

Crack houses are a primary reason the Oakland Police Department has launched "Project Beat Health," an new attempt to cure neighborhood blight throughout the city.

Since the program started in May, crack houses, often garbage-strewn, vermin-infested, and with

illegal utility hookups, have been shut down, boarded up, and in one instance, demolished. Scores more are targeted.

Sgt. Bob Crawford, who with officers Jess Allen and Jim Boyle make up the unofficial blight brigade, said the main reason for the program "is to bring Oakland back to what it was."

Crawford, 50, who grew up in Oakland and has been a police officer for 21 years, said the Police Department and virtually every other city agency are constantly being tipped off to crack houses, usually from angry neighbors.

The police, working closely with the other city agencies and using different ordinances and regulations, then launch a joint attack to get the property owners to shape up or ship out.

"We are now a bureaucracy that speaks with one voice," Crawford said.

Once such a house is identified,

police and such city agencies as the Housing Conservation and the Fire Department, and occasionally the county, join forces.

Housing Department Manager Roy L. Schweyer said the program seems to be "working really well."

"It's good to work with the police and go into certain areas," he said. "It seems like our joint efforts make the work last longer. The people are not going back into the properties as quickly and there is less vandalism," he said.

Crawford said there are several steps taken.

First, the property owner is identified and the status of the people occupying the property is determined.

The majority of the time they turn out to be local drug dealers who are using the properties to sell their wares, oblivious to open sewers and piles of garbage.

Crawford said that usually the

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narcotics dealers don't care that much about their surroundings, but said on at least one occasion in East Oakland a 'garbage collector was pulled from his truck and under threat of physical harm was made to haul away refuse.

Crawford said when the preliminary "intelligence" gathering has been completed, he and his crew inspect the property with no advance notice.

Obvious violations, such as abandoned cars and excessive garbage, are dealt with right away through citations.

But if there is evidence of rats and vermin and illegal utility hookups, the city has the authority through ordinances enacted in June to take abatement action.

Crawford said he has frequently called Alameda County vector control and on at least one occasion the county hazardous materials division. The dope-dealing property owner found out — at considerable expense — that the garage on his site was saturating the ground underneath with gasoline and other petroleum products.

Usually the property owner has 10 days to correct such problems and can appeal any abatements.

But Crawford said if there is "an immediate health and safety hazard" such as the property being insecure and littered with hypodermic needles and condoms, "we have the authority to

get it done immediately."

That means private contractors are brought in to clean up and board up the property and the property owner fined for the cost, usually between \$600 and \$2,000.

If the problems continue and the property owner refuses to cooperate, harsher measures can be taken, Crawford said.

The most extreme measure is demolition, which has happened once already when the owner did not respond to warnings from the city.

The other, which has not been attempted — although it is allowable under the state health and safety code — is for the city to confiscate the property for up to a year and fine the owner \$25,000.

If the owner still refuses to cooperate the city can sell the property.

Crawford said that so far, all

legal occupants of the houses have been relocated without any problems and there have been no legal challenges.

He said the program has gained the support of a variety of community groups, particularly Oakland Community Organizations, and it is not uncommon for neighborhood residents to thank them once they have boarded up one of the blighted properties.

Special police task force cleans out 'filthy' crime den

By Richard Spencer
The Tribune

Oakland

Backed by officers from the police department's Project Beat Health, city and county inspectors descended on the Beverly Terrace Motel in the Elmhurst District yesterday, and what they found wouldn't soothe a weary traveler.

Room two, with a view of the parking lot fronting the dreary, one-story building, yielded syringe caps, a piece of mirror topped by a razor blade, a smudged glass pipe for smoking crack cocaine, frameless stained mattresses with ripped covers, sordid carpeting, dilapidated furniture and a squalid bathroom.

"It's horrible. This is bad. They are going to have to clean this up," Laura Moore, of the Alameda County Health Care Service Agency's Vector Control Services District said, after inspecting the 20-unit structure at

MacArthur Boulevard and Truman Avenue.

Oakland Fire Inspector Gordon Gullett's list of violations included piles of rubbish and combustible debris, illegal storage of paint and other flammable materials, lack of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, blocked electrical panels, hazardous wiring, and laundry room fire hazards.

Grimy, sagging drapes, bars on the manager's window and door, and a sign promising rooms for \$22 plus tax, set the motel's exterior mood, and inside one room, a discarded sanitary napkin, moth-eaten, urine-stained mattresses, and scores of roaches left behind by marijuana smokers, littered shabby carpeting.

"This used to be the kind of place visiting relatives could stay," Sgt. Robert Crawford, su-

supervisor of Project Beat Health said, "and in 1988 we had more than 100 felony crime, drug and prostitution reports from this location."

Until his family moved in 1957, Crawford lived almost around the corner at 98th Avenue and Lawlor Street.

He said PHB, formed last October to zero in on blighted properties, has abated approximately 35 problem locations, and complaints from beat officers and neighbors about filthy conditions, drug use and prostitution, resulted in yesterday's raid.

"We're here to stand by and preserve the peace," he said. "In the past, inspectors were harassed and couldn't do their jobs. We're enabling people to use crack cocaine by permitting these places to exist, and the purpose of all this is to take neighborhoods away from criminals and bring them back, making them safe again."

"Beat Health Care imparts a

care and concern for residents who live in the area," he said.

The motel's owners must correct improprieties for which they are cited or close, Crawford said, adding "we'll be hitting more motels and crack houses in the future."

As inspectors went room to room in the morning cold finding rodent feces, garbage and broken toilets, PG&E repairmen turned off the electricity, citing unpaid bills, and said power and gas service won't be restored until fire hazards are fixed.

Motel manager Betty Bulsara, said repairs to the building began recently, and she complained to police about drug use, but no one was ever arrested.

"This is a mess," Alameda County Deputy District Attorney Tom Barni, of the consumer and environmental protection division said. "It's bad for the neighborhood. It's bad for Oakland. We'll review the reports. There may be basis for filing an improper business suit."

Tenants removed from squalid hotel get short-term help

MON FEB 27 1989

The Tribune

Tenants of a dilapidated Oakland apartment hotel, turned out by impromptu police and fire department action because the structure was "uninhabitable," were given shelter and food through the weekend by Red Cross disaster services.

The 78 people, including 35 children, were convinced to take advantage of the emergency housing arranged through the police department, before Fire Marshal Jerry Blueford issued his finding that the three-story wooden structure at 734 23rd St. was "uninhabitable" and ordered the gas and electricity turned off.

"The place was rat, mouse and cockroach infested. I saw only one toilet in the whole building that worked and that flushed down on the apartment below," said Sgt. Bob Crawford, head of the Oakland police Beat Health Unit. "People said human feces came up through their drains. There were holes in the walls. If there were a fire, there was no way out of some units, no doors and no windows."

Crawford said tenants were paying from \$275 to \$500 a month for space in the building.

Events began at 9 a.m. Thursday as the unit, a task force of police and city and county code inspectors, arrived at the building to "abate" crime conditions that included "hundreds" of drug arrests and three homicides in the last year.

After finding the dangerous conditions, he asked the Red Cross to offer emergency aid through its disaster relief pro-

'I saw only one toilet in the whole building that worked and that flushed down on the apartment below.'

— Sgt. Bob Crawford

gram on the ground that "this is a disaster waiting to happen."

City workers then convinced the tenants to leave voluntarily.

Roy Schwyer, city housing manager, said the building had "substantial" code violations which his department will study in deciding whether to issue a declaration that it is substandard. Tenants will be given top priority for city subsidized housing units, and some could have new homes in "about a week."

City officials identified the owner as Paul Urauchi, who also lived in the building. Urauchi could not be reached for comment.

The building contained 36 apartments when Urauchi last obtained a certificate of occupancy in 1985, according to city records. Officials at the scene said many more jerry-rigged units had been created since then.

Judy Kawalek, information officer of the Red Cross's Eastbay chapter said displaced people could check at the Red Cross office today for possible extensions of housing and food help.

SAT APR 29 1989

Oakland crack house comes tumbling down

By Kelly Gust
The Tribune

A bulldozer claw reached out, sucked up a load of splintered wood and spit it into a waiting truck.

The little crowd on the sidewalk cheered, clapped and raised their coffee and doughnuts in salute as the suspected crack house disappeared.

The owner of the demolished house...

"We need more housing in this area. It hurts us to tear a house down, but sometimes you have no alternatives," Kay Gozony said yesterday morning as she watched the bulldozer mash the last bit of the abandoned house at East 14th Street and 50th Avenue in Oakland.

Neighbors had been out on the sidewalk since 7 a.m., savoring

every growl as the bulldozer slowly leveled a house where they say drug dealing squatters lived.

After years of battling Uzi-toting drug dealers in their neighborhoods, the demolition — the first since the Oakland Police Department opened its Beat Health Unit 11 months ago to close down or demolish drug

houses — was a sweet victory for the residents.

The house razing was the city's second big step this week in Oakland's war on crack cocaine.

In the other development, the city began a court battle, using a two-year-old state law in Oakland for the first time, to shut down and possibly seize an Olive

Street house where police suspect drugs are sold.

The demolished house at 4852 E. 14th Street was one of about 100 suspected drug houses that have been boarded up by the city for health and safety code violations.

It was torn down only after its

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owner ignored city citations ordering it to be fixed up, said OPD Sergeant Robert Crawford, commander of the Beat Health Unit, which works with the health department, fire department, housing code inspectors and vector control to drive out crack houses.

The owner of the demolished house, Manney Hassan, could not be reached for comment. But according to Crawford, he is facing about \$10,000 in city liens on his property — \$8,500 to pay for the demolition and \$1,500 to cover the city's costs for boarding it over.

Although happy neighbors toasted the demolition, Crawford said "this isn't a success story." Crawford says he would consider it a success if they could clean up the drug problem and put the house back into residential use.

That's the tack the city is taking in court against a house on Olive Street.

Using the 1987 state Drug Abatement Law, the action against the lived-in house at

8401 Olive St. in East Oakland is a whole new venture for the city, Assistant City Attorney Joyce Hicks said.

Under that law, property owners who fail to clean up drug trafficking in their buildings face shutdown for up to a year or fines of up to \$25,000.

Thursday in Alameda County Superior Court, the city was granted a temporary restraining order forbidding Freddie Mayo, owner of the Olive Street house, from unlawfully selling, serving, storing, keeping, manufacturing or giving away drugs on the premises.

According to Oakland Police, 16 drug-related arrests were made at the Olive Street house during a 14-month period in 1988 and 1989, and 31 similar arrests were made within a two-block radius of the house during the same time period.

In addition, police said more than \$1,000 in cash, \$10,000 in rock cocaine and three handguns were confiscated in connection with the arrests on the premises.

On May 10, the city will have a court hearing on its request for a

preliminary injunction against



Neighbors and police watch the demolition on E. 14th Street.

preliminary injunction against drug sales at Mayo's house. If the city is granted the injunction, and it is violated, the city can close the house for up to a year. The owner would have to pay for the city's enforcement or forfeit the house to the city.



Two-year-old state law in Oakland for the first time, to shut down and possibly seize an Olive

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~~Oakland~~ plans *Police Beat Health Unit* team to close crack houses

TUE JUL 11 1989

By Jack Cheevers
The Tribune

In a sharp escalation of Oakland's battle against crack cocaine, city officials yesterday proposed spending \$1 million to create a special team of police and other city workers whose goal is to shut down 200 "crack houses" annually.

City Manager Henry Gardner said the 11-person team, by enforcing state drug-nuisance abatement laws, should be able to "virtually eliminate" Oakland's estimated 600 crack houses within three years.

Gardner also suggested a novel approach for financing the anti-crack house effort — by

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using city redevelopment money. Such funds traditionally have been used almost exclusively to build commercial developments and housing projects.

Calling the program an "aggressive expansion" of the city's anti-crack efforts, Gardner cautioned that it won't eliminate crack sales and use in the city.

But, he said, "crack houses, which constitute the worst form of neighborhood blight and allow for convenient distribution and use of the drug, can be identified and abated."

Crack houses are single-family homes and apartments where crack, a highly addictive, smokable form of cocaine, is sold and consumed. The dwellings, often abandoned by their owners and inhabited by transients, are magnets for violence and vandalism.

Gardner is scheduled to ask the City Council tonight to set aside funds from the city Redevelopment Agency to bankroll the new anti-drug squad.

Community anti-drug leaders said they were pleased with the plan, but that the goal of eradicating crack houses in three years may prove difficult to achieve.

"Three years is a good plan. But you know how these things go — you close down one and something else pops up somewhere else," said JoAnna Lougin, president of Oakland Community Organizations, a federation of nine church and neighborhood groups in the city's flatlands areas.

City officials have been under rising pressure from OCO and other neighborhood activists to intensify efforts against crack houses, which are usually located in flatland neighborhoods.

Last month, in a speech before OCO members, Mayor Lionel Wilson said the city's crack problem constituted an "emergency" and promised to do more to ease it.

The mayor, who is running for reelection next year, later said he had directed Gardner to draw up a "closely coordinated plan of attack" on drugs, although he gave the city manager until year's end to finish it.

Wilson said yesterday it is "highly appropriate" to spend redevelopment money to combat crack because much of the city's cocaine trafficking is concentrated in redevelopment areas in East and West Oakland.

Under Gardner's plan, the city will designate three uniformed police officers and five civilian police technicians to pursue crack houses. They will be aided by an assistant city attorney, a "community liaison" officer and other city employees.

Police Sgt. Robert Crawford, who will head the crack-house team, said it is basically an expansion of the police department's well-received "beat health unit," which now conducts crack-house shutdowns.

"I think it's a move in the right direction," he said. "I think it's something that will change this city if it's successful, and I intend to make sure it is."

Since it was set up last October, the beat health unit has closed 90 crack houses, Crawford said. The group is staffed by two full-time street officers, with the assistance of three officers who provide administrative support.

Like the beat health unit, the new team will make use of California's 1973 Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Law, which allows cities to close down crack houses as health and safety hazards.

Under the shutdown process, city officials identify crack houses and ask property owners to clean them up.

If owners refuse, the city can sue them in civil court proceedings, seeking a court order closing down the dwelling for up to one year.

Crawford said the beat health unit has been successful in all but one instance of persuading property owners to comply voluntarily.

Lougin said while she approves of the stepped-up efforts against crack houses, the city, along with state and federal governments, must put money into education and treatment programs, not simply law enforcement.

"I think it's a good plan ... (but) this is just one piece of the pie," she said.

Crack house owners agree to sell, pay fine

Oakland enforcing new anti-drug law

TUE AUG - 1 1989
By Kelly Gust
The Tribune

An East Oakland family, accused by the city of allowing drug sales at their home, will be forced to move and their house sold to a new owner Friday.

Enforcing city health and safety code regulations, Oakland police have closed more than 100 suspected crack houses in the past year. But this is the first time the city has used a new state drug abatement law to close a building. **PROTECT**

The sale and move are part of an agreement reached between the City Attorney's Office and the family of Freddie Mayo, of 8401 Olive St.

According to Oakland police, 16 drug-related arrests were made at the house during a 14-month period in 1988 and 1989, and 31 similar arrests were made within a two-block radius during the same time.

The family, who declined to comment, has agreed to pay the city \$10,000 from the sale of the house. The cash will go to Oakland Police Department's new Beat Health Unit, which brought the action.

"With this money we intend to do many, many more" closures, said Sgt. Robert Crawford, Beat Health commander. "We're on a roll ... We're onto something that works."

Assistant City Attorney Joyce Hicks says the city expects to begin court proceedings against at least two other properties by the end of August.

Under the 1987 state Drug

*'We're on a roll ...
We're onto something
that works.'*

—Sgt. Robert Crawford,
Beat Health commander

Abatement Law, which has been used about 20 times statewide, cities can fine property owners who fail to stop drug trafficking on their property up to \$25,000, and can shut their buildings for up to a year.

The Mayo family agreement, which is expected to get final approval in Alameda County Superior Court on Friday, requires the new house buyer be drug-free and subject to city approval.

Arlene West, attorney for the Mayos, said the family has already lined up a buyer, a developer who will rehabilitate the property and sell it again soon. The new buyer will have to meet city approval as well, West said.

Although the family did not want to sell the house, it was cheaper than continuing the court fight that began in May, West said.

"It just got to the point where they couldn't afford to continue the litigation on the house," West said. "They were going to end up with nothing."

Although this is Oakland's first

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Crack

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case of this kind, Los Angeles has recorded 17 drug abatements since the new law passed. Los Angeles Deputy City Attorney Marcia Gonzales says that has

made major improvements in some of the city's most drug-plagued neighborhoods.

"For every dealer you arrest there's probably five more waiting to move in" in their place, Gonzales said. But when the drug sales site closes, it puts them all out of business. "It has a ripple effect."

Sgt. Bob Crawford, crimebuster

MON SEP - 4 1989

CLAIM TO FAME

Project
Crimebusting head of the Beat Health Unit, the Oakland Police Department's weapon against crack cocaine houses in Oakland. Crawford and his unit have swept into more than 100 houses, kicked out drug dealers and addicts and boarded up the dealers' headquarters.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"Know this: I am personally committed to bringing Oakland back to what it once was, a beautiful, safe and good place to live. I'll call anybody, anywhere. I'll do whatever it takes to get the job done. We're a legal Mafia, if you will."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

"It really breaks my heart not to be able to do something immediately (when a call comes in.) We have a backlog of 400-500 locations to work on ... and we have limited resources and manpower."

LAST ACCOMPLISHMENT

"Closing down a crack house on Olive Street. There we used the full force of the 1987 Drug Abatement Law. We've cleaned up the location, the house was sold, and the previous owners will pay a \$10,000 fine that will go back to the Beat Health Unit to continue the war on drugs."

CLOSEST ALLY

"My wife. She has always been there for me. Ours was a teenage marriage that's worked for 32 years."

BIO-GRAPHIC

Born Pittsburgh, Pa., 50 years ago. Grew up in Oakland. Attended Durant School and Oakland Technical High School. Entered the Oakland Police Department in 1968 after serving two years in the police reserves. Assignments have included patrol, youth services, communications and training. Married, with two grown daughters.

Beat Health Unit TUE. NOV. 21 1989

Two recent developments provided Oakland neighbors with additional ammunition to fight drug dealing. The Oakland Police Department's Beat Health Unit attacks crack with a multi-faceted approach, using everything in the city's arsenal including the enforcement of building codes and public utility rules. The unit has closed more than 140 crackhouses.

"We don't close the books on an area until the crack problem is abated," said Sgt. Bob Crawford, the mastermind of Beat Health. "If you turn on a light and clean up the place, you make it less conducive to dealing. You don't see drug dealing at the Kaiser Center. My mission is to make the en-

tire city unconducive to drug dealing."

In addition, two court rulings last summer handed neighbors another anti-drug tool. Berkeley and San Francisco courts fined the owners of crackhouses, awarding small-claims damages to the neighbors whose property values had declined because of the drug activities.

The Berkeley residents of Francisco Street, the first to file such a suit, are writing a handbook for other crack-plagued neighborhoods. Since the court rulings, neighbors have found landlords more willing to evict tenants involved with drug activity.

Police use crack house tactic to close down massage parlor

EBL APR 6 1990

By Harry Harris
The Tribune

Police yesterday adopted a tactic they use to shut down suspected crack houses to close a downtown massage parlor that has been the source of complaints over suspected prostitution.

Officers from Oakland's Beat Health Unit, the police vice squad and city representatives shut off electric power to Oriental Health Club and Massage, 1608 San Pablo Ave. and ordered the building closed for building code violations.

Police said they have received several complaints of prostitution at the parlor for several years and undercover officers sent inside had been solicited for acts of prostitution by masseuses.

Neither the business owner, who police identified as Phuong McDermott, 39, or any of the masseuses was arrested.

But besides having her electric power turned off, McDermott was told she must correct several building code violations in the building which had been damaged in the Oct. 17 earthquake, Sgt. Bob Crawford said.

Structural engineers had decreed the building, which sits in the shadow of City Hall, should have only limited access, he said, and must not be the site of an everyday business.

"We found rats, cockroaches, an open sewer trap and significant faulty, dangerous wiring as well as fire code violations," Crawford said.

McDermott charged yesterday that police were harassing her and said no prostitution took place at her business. "We don't do anything wrong," she said.

McDermott said she had already planned to correct things the inspectors found before police came. "We plan to fix our building," she said.

If McDermott wants to reopen, she will have to spend thousands of dollars to bring the building up to codes as well as get a certificate of occupancy. "That will take a long time," said Crawford, adding that police would oppose any reopening.

Police decided to use the code violation approach because the district attorney's office was reluctant to prosecute prostitution cases originating from the business. It was the first time they have used such an approach to close a massage parlor.

Vice Squad Officer Vic Bullock said police have received complaints about prostitution activity at the spa going back over several years. He said undercover officers who went in for massages have been solicited by masseuses for sex acts. But because the officers first got massages, prosecutors had been hesitant to charge the cases, police said.

WED JAN 9 1991

Police ask court to evict drug dealers

By Will Jones
The Tribune

OAKLAND —
POLICE —

OAKLAND POLICE are asking an Alameda County Superior Court judge to order the owner of a 15-unit West Oakland housing complex to evict her drug-dealing tenants or close the apartment.

The city attorney's office, in a complaint filed in court Friday, charged that the three-story building at 521 West Grand Ave. is a haven for drug trafficking.

Police said that between Aug. 25, 1989 and last Nov. 14, officers made 32 arrests for narcotic offenses while confiscating 161 rocks of crack cocaine, drug paraphernalia, a rifle and two revolvers and \$1,143 in cash.

Officer Jesse Allen of the department's Beat Health Unit, which enforces the closure of drug houses, said the owner has been told on numerous occasions to clean up the building or close it.

"We want her to sell the building to

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someone who will bring it up to city building codes and rent the units to tenants not involved in drugs," Allen said Monday.

Owner Joanna Roberts of Oakland said she is in the process of selling the building and expects the sale to be completed by Tuesday.

Roberts, who has owned the housing complex for 19 years, said she has made every effort to evict tenants trafficking in drugs, including hiring a new person to manage the property and boarding up vacant units.

She said that once she learns that a tenant is dealing in narcotics, she immediately evicts them.

"I evicted two (tenants) last Friday," Roberts said, adding that one of the major suspected drug dealers was recently arrested and jailed.

The owner said she also has

sought help from the police to evict drug dealers, but they have been slow to respond to her plea for help.

"The building is my pride and joy and I hate to give it up, but I have no choice, now," Roberts said.

She added that most of her tenants were "good people" who got hooked on drugs by dealers after they moved in.

A hearing on the city's petition to close the building is scheduled for 2 p.m. Feb. 4 before the presiding judge of the Superior Court.

Police Sgt. Bob Crawford, who heads the health unit, said the attempt to close the housing units is part of the department's ongoing efforts to shut down drug houses throughout the city.

He said more than 400 such houses have been closed because of violation of the the state's public nuisance laws and city building codes.

Prevention is best crack cure

WED MAY 8 1991

Treating crack abuse as a health problem is far more cost-effective than spending millions to imprison abusers as criminals. That's why two programs, a new one pending in Contra Costa County and another ongoing in Oakland, merit public support.

"New Options for Recovery," the project pending in Contra Costa County, would use a \$4.5 million state grant to establish three centers where an estimated 300 crack-affected women and children could be helped during the next three years. The program would aim to reduce the number of an estimated 500 Contra Costa infants who test positive for drugs at birth each year.

Right now, limited treatment programs focus primarily on treating drug-exposed babies, often after the babies are taken from their mothers and put in foster care. That leaves the mother vulnerable to continue to use crack and, in many cases, to become pregnant again during which the next infant is also exposed to the drug.

The grant — if it comes through — will be "a tremendous boost" that will "allow us to do more than simply take a drug-exposed child from a mother without doing anything to stop the problem from happening again and again," notes Supervisor Tom Torlakson, who represents eastern Contra Costa.

The grant would finance two day-treatment centers for women — in eastern and western Contra Costa — and one residential center in Martinez where crack-addicted women could live with their children while overcoming addiction. Keeping mothers and babies together has proven a successful treatment mode by Mandela House, the pioneering residential center in Oakland run privately by Minnie Thomas.

But the grant is not yet a sure thing. Another county is protesting the state's choice of Contra Costa for one of six pilot programs. Yet, because Contra Costa's appli-

The program would aim to reduce the number of an estimated 500 Contra Costa infants who test positive for drugs at birth each year.

cation scored highest in the latest round of competition, hopes are justifiably strong the grant will be officially awarded — as it should be — within the next few weeks.

Questions about future funding also worry Sgt. Bob Crawford, who runs the Oakland Police Department's Beat Health Unit. In the last two years, the unit shut down 478 crack houses in the city. If the city's looming budget deficit ends up requiring police department cuts, the Beat Health Unit will be vulnerable along with other police programs not tied strictly to emergency response.

Such a cut would be tragic. The unit has shown that combining police functions with public health, zoning, building code and other city powers can result in owners of crack houses being forced to clean up their properties or lose them. About 70 percent of former crack houses are now cleaned up and reinhabited, a figure successful enough to bring California Sen. John Seymour to Oakland last weekend for a tour. Seymour is wisely considering including in federal legislation he's sponsoring grants to other cities to duplicate Oakland's innovative program.

Whether it's helping pregnant women, or mothers of young children get off crack or helping neighborhoods get rid of crack houses, prevention hits the problem at the beginning. Public policy makers should support more programs along this line.

Landlord told to end drug traffic on his property

FRI MAR 22 1991

By Tribune staff

The owner of an East Oakland house has been ordered by a judge to immediately cease allowing the property to be used as a base for illegal drug operations.

A temporary restraining order preventing the house at 1148 71th Avenue from being used to store or distribute drugs was issued yesterday by Judge Demetrios Agretelis, presiding judge of the Alameda County Superior Court.

Agretelis set a hearing for 2 p.m. April 10, when he will decide whether to order the owner, Vernolia McCullough, to close the house for a year or sell it.

The judge issued his order at the request of the City of Oakland and the police department's beat health unit, which are attempting to close down drug houses throughout the city.

In court documents, police say they have made 22 drug arrests at the house since January 1989 and have seized marijuana, \$5,110 in cash, weapons, a bullet-proof vest, a beeper and bags for packaging and distributing drugs.

It was the third time since the summer on 1989 that the police have obtained a court order to close a suspected drug house, according to Sgt. Bob Crawford, head of the beat health unit.

Police have also closed 469 other houses because of drug dealings without a court order.

TRASH

Suburban garbage dirties city streets

By Harry Harris
Tribune staff writer

IT COULD COST you \$1,000 to dump on Oakland.

That's the maximum fine for illegal dumping and in the past five days at least 60 people from all over the Eastbay, including upscale communities like Danville, have been cited, with one person going to jail. *police*

It's part of a crackdown by a task force of police and other city and county agencies who believe a clean street is a safe street, said Sgt. Bob Crawford.

Crawford commands the police department's Beat Health Unit, which usually specializes in closing down crack houses.

But the unit is also part of the Specialized Multi-Agency Response Team, which meets every two weeks to address other concerns. SMART also includes the city's Office of Public Works, the Office of Community Development Housing Conservation, Alameda County Environmental Health and Southern Pacific railroad police.

Crawford said the idea of going after people who toss their trash in Oakland neighborhoods instead of properly disposing of it in a landfill "has been a bee in our bonnet for sometime."

He said studies have shown "a dirty city invites crime" because it looks like residents of those areas don't care, which generally isn't true.

The trash can also pose a health problem, such as attracting rats.

It is "personally affronting to citizens to have people from other communities come into the city and dump their garbage," he said.

Crawford said that more than half of those cited so far are from other cities, including Danville, Alameda, San Leandro, Hayward and Castro Valley.

He said some actually told police they considered the locations they were cited at to be "the dump."

They all have court dates of June 27 and have been asked to

It is 'personally affronting to ... have people from other communities come into the city and dump their garbage.'

— Sgt. Bob Crawford

bring receipts from legitimate dump sites.

Crawford said the Memorial Day weekend was chosen to launch the crackdown because public works personnel said most illegal dumping occurs at such times. Many people use these holiday weekends to clean out garages, basements and yards.

See TRASHING, Page A-6

There are at least 10 major areas throughout the city, from the hill areas to the flatlands, whose streets have been turned into unwanted dumps.

They include all of Railroad Avenue and the St. Vincent de Paul Society building on San Leandro Street, both in East Oakland; all of Wood Street near the Southern Pacific property in West Oakland and the Lowell Street corridor in North Oakland.

Crawford said police believe the main reason people don't want to haul their refuse to proper dump sites is because of rate increases at such places.

Over the weekend four sites, including Railroad Avenue and St. Vincent de Paul, were staked out by police and officials from the other agencies.

He said people were observed illegally dumping everything imaginable, from actual garbage to paint, furniture and even a motorcycle. Crawford said when it's reasonable, the people are forced to reload the trash into their vehicles. If that can't be done, a city crew cleans up.

Some of those cited at St. Vincent de Paul tried to claim they were making donations — the society does accept legitimate donations of usable goods.

One man was arrested after he was cited for trying to dump unusable broken furniture at St. Vincent's and then allegedly going right around the corner to Railroad Avenue to dump again, not knowing he was being observed by another stakeout team.

Crawford promised that police would continue their periodic crackdowns on illegal dumpers.

"They're never going to know when or where," Crawford said. "The city wants to make it loud and clear. Oakland is not a dump."

Illegal dumping is dumb

MON JUN 3 1991

If you can't SWAT 'em, out-SMART 'em. Or so says the Oakland Police Department's Beat Health Unit.

Having proved successful at shutting down crack houses, the Beat Health Unit is expanding its aggressive efforts to clean up the city in another way. It's catching people illegally dumping trash and garbage on public streets and alleyways.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, 68 people were cited by police for dropping their leavings around the city. More than half came from other cities including Danville, Alameda, San Leandro, Hayward and Castro Valley and as far away as Patterson in the San Joaquin Valley.

Of course, that means the rest came from Oakland, which is no better. Oaklanders must respect their city as much as they expect non-Oaklanders to.

The police squad gladly shares the credit for its latest campaign with several other agencies. All are part of the Specialized Multi-Agency Response Team, or SMART.

Besides the beat health unit, SMART's members also include the city's offices of Public Works and Community Development Housing Conservation, Alameda County's Environmental Health and the Southern Pacific railroad police. The idea of a coordinated agency effort to go after illegal dumpers "has been a bee in our bonnet for some time," says Sgt. Bob Crawford, who heads up the Beat Health Unit.

That reprehensible practice has led to refuse and garbage being thrown in many places, including 10 major spots from the hills to the flatlands. Among them are all of Railroad Avenue and the St. Vincent de Paul

More than half came from other cities including Danville, Alameda, San Leandro, Hayward and Castro Valley.

Society building on San Leandro Street, both in East Oakland; all of Wood Street near Southern Pacific in West Oakland and the Lowell Street corridor in North Oakland.

Getting caught is no joke. Those cited must appear in Oakland Municipal Court on June 27, where they face possible fines of up to \$1,000 each. But then, it costs the city about \$300,000 a year to clean up the messes.

Even more than the monetary costs are the heartache to those who live near the illegal dumping spots. It's not only an aesthetic problem, but a matter of health and safety as well.

Crawford said studies show that "a dirty city invites crime because it looks like residents of those areas don't care, which generally isn't true." Furthermore, refuse invites rats and other vermin that cannot be tolerated.

The Oakland Public Works Department is asking the city to fund a \$50,000 anti-dumping program to continue enforcement and education. Meanwhile, residents from all cities should haul their trash to a landfill and pay for it to be properly disposed of. That's not only the decent and neighborly thing to do, it's now the SMART procedure as well.

Drug buyers nabbed en masse by FBI, Oakland law officers

SUN AUG - 2 1992

By Diana S. Kim
Tribune staff writer

police

In the second such raid in two months, local and federal law enforcement agencies issued more than 77 citations to marijuana and crack cocaine buyers and dealers and confiscated 43 cars in East Oakland yesterday, police said.

The area near 71st Avenue and Hamilton Street is the best place in the city to buy "weed," authorities and buyers alike said yesterday.

But the crackdown was prompted by five homicides within the last 18 months involving the sale of marijuana, said Mike Nisperos, drug co-ordinator for the mayor's office.

"It's not a marijuana issue. It's a violence issue," he said.

The joint police-FBI sweep targeted buyers. "We want to send them a message — there's a penalty involved," said Lorenzo McCrary, FBI assistant special agent.

Of those issued citations, 44 percent were from outside Oakland, said Oakland police Sgt. Bob Crawford. Most of the offenses were misdemeanors with as many as four felonies for possession or intent to sell crack cocaine, Crawford said.

Around 10 a.m., a citation was given to an Oakland legal secretary. A few hours later, an Oakland cabbie was stripped of his cab and cited for possession of marijuana.

"I don't believe this is happening to me. I ruined my life just because I made one stop," said the cabbie, who was talking non-

stop in the back of his taxi while an FBI agent drove him to a location near the Coliseum to process the citation papers.

"I won't get another job, and because of that I won't be able to continue my school in August."

The cabbie, identified only as Howard, said he's been attending California State University at Hayward for two years to study air conditioning and refrigeration maintenance.

According to OPD's Crawford, the buyers "are regular people and that's the sad thing — lots of folks with good jobs."

"I don't think the people we take cars from will come back," he said.

Crawford said his unit has been meeting with neighborhood

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groups on the average of five times a week and earned support for a raid such as yesterday's.

"We are going to keep the pressure on out here until (the drug market) dries up," he said.

Pat Maiers of Oakland Community Organizers applauded yesterday's raid at a news conference called yesterday by Mayor Elihu Harris and said the police "can't do enough" to counter the drug infestation in her neighborhood.

During the first raid on May 31, 39 cars were confiscated and three were kept by the government, Crawford said. The rest were returned to the owners after they paid various fees.

The cars seized yesterday ran the spectrum from Mercedes to rundown Mustangs to sleek bright red sports cars to vans that looked like leftovers from the '60s.

A 40-year-old San Franciscan identified only as Arthur looked embarrassed and despondent that his friend's car was confiscated though it was Arthur who purchased the marijuana. But according to federal law, the FBI may seize cars once an occupant is cited by police for possessing marijuana. Both men were actually cited, and looked relieved that they were not being jailed.

Car owners will be able to petition for the return of their cars through U.S. District Court as early as Monday, McCrary said.

At the news conference, Mayor Harris declared: "We're really attacking the demand level. People would not be selling the drugs if there isn't a demand.

"People who purchase the drugs are as crazy as those who sell them. The well-to-do people are taking advantage of people here. They don't see themselves as part of the problem, but they are contributing to the violence."

Woman fights seizure of house

WED DEC 23 1992

By Susan Marquez Owen
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — In the first case of its kind in Oakland, a 63-year-old woman is defending her right to keep her home from being boarded up by police who say the house served as a staging area for "rampant, runaway drug dealing."

Vernolia McCullough, whose home in the 1100 block of 71st Avenue was seized by police and closed in April, is being sued by the city of Oakland in Alameda County Superior Court.

The city wants to close up the house for another year and fine McCullough \$25,000 under the city's Beat Health program. The program has had more than 1,000 homes declared public nuisances for harboring drug dealers since 1988.

Police say a 20-block area surrounding the

" *She's just one old lady who knows the folks and talks to them, and they're making her out to be Al Capone."*

Daniel Horowitz
attorney

house where McCullough and her allegedly marijuana-dealing sons lived for 17 years was "under siege" by drug dealers until police stepped in.

"And it centered around that house and that family," said Oakland Police Sgt. Bob Crawford, who heads the Beat Health program.

Crawford said police observed as many as 400 drug sales a day in the area.

Until now, city homeowners who have been targeted by the police program have agreed to stop dealing drugs or vacate their homes altogether, but McCullough is refusing to give up her rights to the house, said her attorney, Daniel Horowitz.

Horowitz said McCullough has never sold or allowed drugs to be sold out of her house, and cannot be held responsible for people who do it in front of her house.

"She's just one old lady who knows the folks and talks to them, and they're making her out to be Al Capone," Horowitz said.

But Crawford said McCullough was arrested last March for allegedly selling marijuana through juveniles.

Crawford testified Monday that during a surveillance operation, he watched two umbrella-carrying boys run back and forth between McCullough's window and waiting cars on the street.